The COMMONWEAL

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Thoughts About Dividers

THE TINDER to the northeast of us grows daily drier. No great spark would be needed. Premier Mackenzie King, whatever else he may have done, certainly did not settle the problem of overseas conscription by taking a referendum. He has before him two clear alternatives: he can carry on as he has been doing, trying to stave off the day of decision, or he can introduce a bill broadening the terms under which Canada conscripts her citizens and bring down upon his head the almost unanimous wrath of his most solid block of political support. Most prophets are saying that if he sees himself being forced to the latter action, he will resign rather than accede to what he knows would be an application of a torch.

The French Canadian attitude today is very complex. And it is significant and important because it is a symbol of cancer lying at the heart of our common life. There may be a handful of French Canadians who are foolish enough to be indifferent to the outcome of this war. Certainly there are no more than a handful. This handful could also, by a stretch of language, be called fascist. To suggest (as has become a popular US pastime) that the vast majority of this people deserves the appellation is not only false but egregiously silly. Yet that same vast majority undoubtedly is pretty sore, and particularly at its English-speaking fellow countrymen. This soreness takes a peculiar form. Some wit has described it as "anti-pro-British" rather than "pro-anti-British." It springs from a thousand roots. Of all these, the tap root, the big fellow that goes down into the depths to drink even in the driest seasons, is what might be called racial or national or cultural obtuseness—tactlessness, superciliousness, damn-foolishness. With fatal ease the Ontario Orangemen have built their flying wedge, joining up with some fine specimens of the old school tie, and have pulverized what foundations for good feeling and mutual understanding existed. Some of the more rabid Quebec nationalists have formed a flying wedge of their own.

Again we see the shape of a problem which besets us all. General Davis speaks some pretty strong words in England. Our British allies seemingly have opened their hearts to American soldiers, neglecting to make any race distinctions. Instead of being properly appreciative, our white soldiers have thought it would be nice if the British would learn how to conform to our own peculiar prejudices—Heaven knows they have enough of their own already! General Davis wants to know why. And at long last the United States and Great Britain have formally repudiated their extraterritorial rights in China. Which is a good, if tardy, move in the right direction. The divisive forces within the body of the anti-Axis world constitute an immense problem not only for the present but, even more, for the future. It is a problem which calls for political wisdom and which also calls for personal soul-searching on the part of everyone. French and English Canadians need to search their souls. So do the British and the followers of Gandhi and the Indians who don't like Gandhi and the Negroes in the United States and the white people, specially the white people.

Grim Divertisement

THE BRITISH have stepped out of their class in inviting a showdown with the nazi government on the retaliatory treatment of war prisoners. In truth, it needs no comment piped from far down the sidelines, like this one, to emphasize the fact. A spate of disapproval and challenge seems to have welled up from England's own native soil as soon as the governments in England and Canada fulfilled their threat to shackle the same number of prisoners as had been chained in the Reich after the commando raids on Dieppe and Sark. The British of course have brutalities to answer for—too many, perhaps, up and down the vast reaches of the Empire. But these represent the lapses and failures of an attitude, the dingy compromises that are slowly being worked out of the British system. They do not represent the attitude itself. That attitude is a respect for the human person, a humane and civilized tolerance which the best part of the English genius has implemented politically and even socially as an example and a leaven for the world. A good illustration in little was furnished at the height of

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the shackle debate, when a German flier parachuted down over England from his injured plane. Watching him descend, the good housewives shrieked, "Put him in irons!" Surrounding him when he landed, they gave him instead a cup of tea. Of course he was hustled off to prison. But Mr. Churchill's government would have done better to remember that humane detention and a cup of tea win in the end. They are better in themselves than hand- and leg-irons in prison, as all of mankind very well knows and will sooner or later acknowledge; and they are more acceptable to the national genius.

The British have full, objective assurance of being in the right in their dispute with Germany. Some of their raiders tied the hands of captives in the heat of action, to prevent their destroying records or attacking their captors. These bonds were removed before the prisoners landed in England. The counter-action in the Reich of chaining over a thousand British prisoners was a clear violation of the 1929 Geneva agreement on the treatment of captives of war. It would have been wiser to say so, and let it go at that. For if the intermediary offices of the Swiss now fail to compose this quarrel, three times as many British prisoners will be put in chains—that is the threat of a government that in such matters has never failed to make good.

American Co-ops Face a Showdown

UP TILL recently the competition between Consumer Cooperatives and corporate business in the United States has gone on almost unnoticed. Local organization on a small scale has been followed by slow but steady growth. Only in certain sections of the Middle West have the co-ops served as a prominent feature of the economic and social landscape. There have been one or two rather sensational contests, such as that of the Phillipsburg, Kansas, co-op oil refinery, where the consumers won out against determined oil company opposition. But such developments have been almost completely ignored in the daily press; the men and women who have banded together to secure essential goods and services of sound quality and reasonable cost and produced under good labor conditions have gone their way virtually unsung. There is no American parallel to the Scandinavian saga of bringing down for everyone the prices of electric light bulbs and galoshes.

That is why it seems to us that the case of the Cooperative League now pending against the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System marks a turning point. Described briefly the facts are these: For several months a drive to enroll 50,000 adherents who would send $1 each to build up a National Co-op Radio Fund has been in progress. A program was drawn up by a well known New York advertising agency and presented to the radio stations. Entitled "Let's Get Together, Neighbor," it was scheduled to be sent out over 30 stations from coast to coast every Sunday afternoon for 13 weeks, beginning October 11. At the last moment certain stations objected. The Columbia Broadcasting System declared it had a "long established policy not to sell time for programs devoted to public controversial issues. The programs offered by the League were designed to promote a fundamental change in the present system of marketing and distribution." NBC's excuse was that it was against their rules to accept "on a commercial broadcast basis . . . any planned campaign that solicits or promotes membership drives." This crackdown by big business is now being investigated by the Federal Communications Commission. It is to be hoped that these officials will be consistent and sustain the co-ops in the interest of the common good.

N.B.

MORE and more evidence is coming forward in support of the soundness of THE COMMONWEAL'S much maligned attitude in the Spanish Civil War. We were almost alone in the American Catholic press in insisting that it was a mistake to identify a military uprising with Christianity. The latest change of heart to come to our attention is that of Professor Allison Peers who writes in the *Catholic Herald* of London for September 11, 1942, that although he has been referred to as a "stout champion of the Nationalist cause," he never was. "I have fought and will always fight for Christianity; and during the Civil War when the left-wing extremists were (as it seemed to me) attacking Christianity, I could not contemplate their victory with anything but horror. But a Nationalist victory seemed to me less desirable than an agreed solution, though there were indications that General Franco, whom I personally respected, might attempt to bring Spaniards together and pursue a policy of gradual reform. But he has not done this." Again, "that the Spanish dictatorship will survive when its leaders have talked with such bellicosity about a second Empire, have upheld aggression in theory and in practice, have been as aggressive as they dared, is hardly conceivable. Quite apart from that, in the various speeches made during the last two years, General Franco has ranged himself quite definitely on the side of Hitler. He has accepted gifts and decorations from him, asserted that his opponents are already defeated, and proclaimed the superiority of totalitarianism over democracy both in the military and in the economic sphere. Further, he has encouraged Spanish soldiers and airmen to go and fight for Hitler against Soviet Russia. Hitler's defeat cannot but mean the end of his régime."

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Pan-America

WE STOOD at the stern of the ship and there was light snow drifting down into the waters of the Hudson, there was a great big electric sign over in Hoboken, the ferries were lighted up already. We were seeing friends off on a ship late that winter afternoon, before we came into the war. The ship was bound for South America and that was the only trip anyone could take, now that the war was being fought everywhere else and the travel agencies had collected quite a number of Americans and had put them on this ship so that they might buy souvenirs in a lot of ports and then return to argue with the customs officers about paying duty on them. The ship was what is called a cruise ship which means that it had once been useful carrying people across the seas to where they wanted to go but that now it was running round in circles taking people for a ride as on a carousel with the grown up people on the ship escorted like children, aimless, excited, and waiting to be entertained. We walked along the deck; there was an empty swimming pool. You have nothing to say when you are seeing friends off on a ship and someone told the story about the director of the asylum who watched the inmates high diving into a swimming pool one after the other and who said they will be even happier when we can arrange to have some water in it. Beyond the empty swimming pool there was a verandah café and in the lounge people were dancing. We looked through the windows; there was a girl shaking gourds and singing into a microphone and you could not hear anything. The people were moving round holding each other, the girl had her mouth open, she rattled the gourds, the orchestra people moved their bows up and down on the violins and a man had a horn to his mouth. The dark river was outside, the drifting snow; you could not hear anything. Inside the people were dancing, the professional dancer wore a white dinner coat and some of the cruise members already had put on evening clothes. It was cold outside, the snow was drifting down into the somber river and these people looked very foolish dressed in summer evening dress, they looked as if they were acting out a dismal and vulgar charade for Baudelaire's Invitation to the Voyage but people who pay are generally right and this ship indeed was about to perform the trick of carrying its cargo of tourists from the cold and the snow into the full-colored National Geographic summer of the south. You multiplied the number of passengers by the number of trips and you got some sort of statistics about the cultural interpenetration of the Americas.

Or in a zoo you kept specimens of Latin Americans at home. Indians and Latin Americans; Indians and Mexicans. They had mixed or they had not mixed: adobe houses, the dance, sacred and profane—as in the Venetian paintings—the *Penitentes,* the Aztecs or the milder Hopi, Christopher Columbus, Christopher La Farge, American primitive paintings of saints. You put these things, the memory of these things, in New Mexico, conveniently our own, and you got an Englishman, D. H. Lawrence, to live there for an unhappy while and look at them. Lawrence and tourists could attain some familiarity with the Latins, the Indians, the South and the past and not too far away they could also stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon and stare down into a past which brings them and us into a trembling instant of immeasurable time.

Or you can have Conventions and they are fine. The gentleman from Paraguay and the gentleman from Peru listen to the gentleman from Detroit, from Denver. Shuffle and reverse. There is a literature, gentlemen, in South America, in Brasil it is in Portuguese. There is a literature in North America, gentlemen. Learn English, learn Spanish, learn Portuguese. Linguaphone. There are mountains in South America, gentlemen, there are great variations in climate. New York is not the United States, gentlemen, we have the Rockies, the Great Salt Lake. Travel means friendship. There are Catholics in Latin America, Catholics in North America: surely we should understand each other. Surely, indeed. There are Catholics in Germany, Catholics in Patagonia.

In this room in which I write, in this building, in this city, in this nation, in this world there are men separate and lonely, descendants of the lonely and separate men who throughout the ages have sought to create the means to understand each other, the technique of fraternity, the language—it is not Spanish, nor English, nor French—through which they might communicate their message, the graffiti on the walls which might carry some significance from one mind to another.

The seas and the land bind all these men together; they are bound together in war. Yet each man is alone and solitary. Husband and wife bound together in one flesh are alone and separate; the child in the womb is separate and alone within its mother. It is our human condition to be alone ever, and solitary.

Politically and reasonably speaking, it might be just as well to take man's loneliness into account before placing too great hopes in an artificial acceleration of friendship between the peoples of this continent. They cannot speak directly to each other in any words of friendship: they are still talking the sign language of diplomacy and power. It is perhaps not unfortunate that Mr. Sumner Welles in his remarks on Chile and Argentina has made this evident.

C. G. PAULDING.

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The Closed Shop Blues

Is there any feasible compromise between closed shop and no union at all?

By John Cort

A SET-PIECE introduction might go well here. Something like: The houselights dim, the curtain rises and down to the footlights Suzy-Q's a chorus of buxom manufacturers, clad only in pink tights and tax-exempt bonds and singing with lusty bathos: "We've got those Mad-About-It-Sad-About-It-How-Can-We-Be-Glad-About-It-Call-the-Cops!-Clo-o-osed-Shop Blues."

Maybe this approach is too frivolous for a treatment of a book as scholarly and significant as Father Toner's "The Closed Shop." * But I think a little ridicule is in order. Nothing else can do full justice to the act that has been put on in this country, with such shameless abandon, by the National Association of Manufacturers, the US Chamber of Commerce and their friends during the past 40 years.

Not long ago the ladies' garment workers put a clever revue on Broadway called "Pins and Needles." It contained a skit that really did, if I remember rightly, have a chorus of manufacturers singing a song in which they advised their fellow-employers to "Call It Un-American" whenever they wanted to defeat any kind of social or labor reform.

The song, at any rate, is a perfect title for the expensive and high-powered publicity barrage that has been directed at the closed shop by the NAM ever since its New Orleans convention in 1903. Recently the Association published a pamphlet, which has actually been distributed to school children, condemning the closed shop as "a Hitler method." Last year A. W. Hawkes, president of the Chamber of Commerce, denounced it as monopolistic and "contrary to man's God-given right to work."

Even more recently the attack has been stepped up and concentrated on the "maintenance of membership" feature of most awards handed down by the War Labor Board. According to this clause, workers belonging to the union 15 days (generally) after the award becomes effective must remain members for the life of the contract. In many ways the argument over it is similar to that on the closed shop, and employers make the same lofty appeals to "the God-given right to work."

For example, in the New York *Times* for July 23, 1942, Mr. Eugene Grace, president of Bethlehem Steel, criticizes the WLB award in the Little Steel case and says there are "two issues of great moment facing the nation, namely, the demand for a wage increase has direct bearing on the cost of living and the threat of inflation . . ." (for 1941 Mr. Grace pulled down a combined salary-bonus of $537,723, not to mention his take on dividends, bonds, etc., but only an old meanie could imply that this fact has any bearing on inflation, cost of war materials, labor morale, or anything else) ". . . and the demand for a union shop or compulsory maintenance of membership involves the principle of freedom of employment."

Those who are impressed by this sort of high-falutin' nonsense will find nourishing food for thought in Father Toner's objective study. They will find that far from being un-American, the closed shop is actually more ancient in its Americanism than the Declaration of Independence. Records dating back to the seventeenth century reveal that the tailors, butchers, teamsters, carpenters and shoemakers of Boston and New York were given to raising just as much hell then as now when interlopers tried to do their work without joining the guild. It was only natural that this should be so, since they were heirs of the strict English guild system and a society in which the concepts of a just wage, a just profit, and a just price ruled economic life and there were no learned fools from Yale or Harvard to sprinkle holy water on the jungle law of Supply and Demand.

Speaking of laws, the best argument for the closed shop has always been the good old law of self-preservation. A long history of blood and betrayal, blacklists and yellow-dog contracts, labor spies and unemployment has persuaded even the most sanguine labor leaders that the average American employer would rather run his business without benefit of a union contract.

The railroads

Outside the very special case of the railroad industry (see Father Toner's book) no satisfactory compromise seems available between union shop, or closed shop, and no union at all. If it

* The Closed Shop. Jerome L. Toner O.S.B., Ph.D. American Council on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C. Cloth: $3.25. Paper: $2.75.

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weren't for the war, labor wouldn't long put up with the present makeshift, "maintenance of membership." And I don't imagine that employers would long put up with it either. To begin with, there can be no real peace or harmony in a plant where workers are divided into two hostile camps. Union members resent — and who can blame them? — the fact that non-unionists pay no dues and assume no obligations, and yet share all the benefits of a union contract: wage raises, paid vacations, job security, grievance machinery, etc. —benefits that have been won, paid for, and guarded with large quantities of blood, sweat, tears and cash.

The Gallup Poll keeps saying that most Americans don't think any man should be forced to join a union. This is eloquent testimony to the success of the NAM's publicity and the failure, or insufficiency, of labor's publicity. But it is hardly a conclusive argument against the closed shop. Most Americans don't seem to believe in the divinity of Christ. And if a Gallup investigator were to ask them, "Would you prefer not to pay taxes?" at least 87 percent, and more likely 100 percent, would say "Yes." Everybody wants something for nothing. But whereas it is taken for granted that tax dodgers like Al Capone and Moe Annenberg belong in the jug, Messrs. Hawkes, Grace and Pegler go on exalting the similar practice of dues-dodging to the cloudy level of "principle" and "American tradition" and "God-given rights." Which, I repeat, is high-falutin' nonsense.

Father Toner handles this question of rights. If you can't read his book, you can look up Monsignor Ryan's article in the "Catholic Encyclopedia" on "Labor" for an even more detailed discussion of the obvious truism that the right to work is not an absolute, unlimited right, but must yield to limitations imposed by the rights of other workers to such things as living wages, job security, decent working conditions and a strong union. If a closed shop is necessary to insure these things, and it usually is, then a closed shop is morally justified.

The crack at Pegler a while back, or anything else said here, does not indicate that labor—decent American labor, that is—tries to defend or justify the activities of dubious characters who use the closed shop as a kind of blackjack. Labor suffers more from this kind of criminal scum than anyone else. Why should it defend them? In fact, it is nearly always on the complaint of rank-and-file trade unionists that these men are prosecuted—complaints that often mean, for the complainants, lost jobs or broken heads, and all too often gunfire and violent death on some side street in the small hours of the night. Labor respects the unsung courage of these humble men more than the spot-lit, lucrative, and indiscriminate bile of Brother Pegler, even though that bile has on occasion helped to speed several prominent thugs to their just rewards. For which, thanks.

As a matter of fact, I think it would be accurate to say that there is more genuine, honest concern in the ranks of labor over the abuses of the closed shop than there is among employers and anti-labor journalists. For all their fancy talk about Joe Zilch's "God-given right to work" and "to be free from coercion from any source," most of them give not one hoot for Joe Zilch. Or in Joe's own words, "Who do they think they're kiddin'?" What their hearts really bleed for is their own purely imaginary right to run American industry, American government, and American life for their own sweet benefit.

Abuses

But the abuses remain, and this slightly bilious outburst is not designed to lay down a smoke screen. The most serious of them are (1) union officials combining the closed shop with the closed union to create a monopoly control, and usually restriction, of the labor supply; and (2) union officials using the power they have over the membership's jobs, by reason of closed shop contracts, to silence any and all opposition to their administration of union affairs.

There are two principal ways in which a union can close its doors to new membership. One is by simply closing the books and the other, more subtle, is by requiring prohibitive initiation fees or apprenticeship requirements. Both methods have, I believe, been found illegal by the courts, and certainly there should be a vigorous prosecution of the remaining offenders. Incidentally, it is to the CIO's credit that its unions have not only kept down their own initiation fees and dues at reasonable levels, but have thereby also forced down many of the higher AFL rates.

As for the other problem—using the closed shop to gag the rank-and-file opposition—Father Toner suggests that any unionist expelled from union membership should have the right to appeal his case to a labor board or to the impartial chairman whose function it is to arbitrate union-management disputes. Something of this kind is necessary, although both these proposals have weaknesses. Most labor boards are overworked now, and it is generally months, and often years, before a case is finally decided. Meanwhile the worker is on the street, or if the law or contract requires, as it should, that he remain at work, then he is in a position to go on making trouble in the event that he really is a union-buster. On the other hand, the fairness of an impartial chairman is by no means certain in such cases, since his job depends on the good will of the union leaders.

The ACTU (Association of Catholic Trade Unionists) has had valuable, and painful, experience in this particular matter. Its members have

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suffered from racketeer, communist and just plain unscrupulous union dictatorships. If the reader could have talked to but one of these—for example, a man who not only lost his job, but was beaten up so badly that he lost his eyesight as well—this whole problem would jump immediately from the musty realm of academic theory to a plane as vital, tragic and horrible as the murder of a friend.

The ACTU has consequently put forward a proposal that closed shop contracts contain a clause providing that any member expelled from union membership, and thereby from his job, should have the right to appeal to an arbitration board composed of one member selected by himself, one selected by the union and one acceptable to both. It is devoutly to be hoped that some such protection for union minorities can be worked out without additional state intervention. If not, labor will have only itself to blame. Thus far we will string along with Pegler.

The final and complete solution, of course, can only appear when rank-and-file unionists learn to take a much more active, intelligent, determined and Christian part in union affairs. The job of teaching them to take such a part is a continuing challenge not only to the ACTU, but to the whole Church, and to all churches, and to all priests and ministers.

But abuses of the closed shop no more destroy the union man's faith in it than political corruption destroys his natural faith in the necessity of government. And there are even employers who join him in this faith. Father Toner reports that in 1940 the US Chamber of Commerce held a referendum of its members on the closed shop, and whereas 1,782 voted against it, all of 68 had the courage to vote in favor. To me this was encouraging. These are the men to spread the doctrine that closed shops can be more efficient, more cooperative, more harmonious, more responsible than open shops.

And Father Toner is another such man. Don't be misled by this inflammatory review. Father Toner's book is calm, objective, eminently reasonable. I recommend it highly (with reservations on the excessive number of misprints and wordy footnotes) to all employers whose shops—and minds—still remain open.

This war can have some good effects, even amid all the slaughter, destruction and hatred. One would be an awakening on the part of both capital and labor to a knowledge of how much they can accomplish by working together and how well they can get along when they honestly put their minds and wills to it. In many war plants this is already apparent. Employers have seen that labor, outside the relatively minor left-wing factions, doesn't want to run industry either during or after the war. What labor wants is simply to be accepted by employers as a body of human beings with equal dignity (and none of your blasted my-good-man patronage) and to be recognized as having similar, if somewhat smaller, stomachs to feed and similar, if somewhat larger, families to support. The drive for a closed shop is only part of this larger movement for recognition of the workers' rightful share in a world that was once regarded, by themselves at least, as the exclusive property of "the bosses."

Russia and Brotherhood

Russia's influence grows despite her propaganda.

By **J. L. Benvenisti**

THE Trade Union Congress which has just taken place here has been marked by three very interesting events, the first of which was the presence of Mr. Daniel Tobin of the AFL as fraternal delegate.

There was a sort of double purpose in dragging poor Mr. Tobin all the way across the Atlantic. We had, to begin with, a sneaking hope that somehow we could persuade him to kiss and be friends with the CIO and the Railroad Brotherhoods and set up a nice unified labor party machine in America on the British model.

It is no good flying into a rage about that kind of thing. The British are like that, and there is nothing you can do about it. But, to do them justice, I must confess that there was behind this yet a further motive. We are very anxious, as you probably know, to get a proper joint Anglo-American Trade Union Committee established, which would be difficult if other American labor organizations were not represented on it. We have already established such a committee with Soviet Russia. Our original intention was to get a tripartite committee going, and since, as you probably also know, negotiations for that have broken down, we feel under the projected arrange-

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ment we might act as a link between the three countries.

The second important event in the Congress was the rejection (it is true by a rather narrow margin) of a motion to suspend the ban on communists holding trade union office. There would at first sight seem to be a contradiction between that rejection and our undoubted desire for closer ties of every kind with Soviet Russia, but that contradiction is illusory—as I shall show in a moment.

I have told you in article after article of the tremendous spiritual influence Russia is exercising over us. Goebbels incidentally has been telling you the same. Well, for once what Dr. Goebbels has told you is perfectly true. Russia has provided the most powerful emotional and spiritual impact that has hit the British worker for a century. To conceal that is to conceal the truth, and may lead ultimately to just those silly misunderstandings which I am rather anxious to clear up—and it is just to prevent misunderstandings of this kind that I underline the fact that communists are still barred from holding trade union office.

The third event of the Congress was the definite underwriting by the Trade Unions of the principle of family allowances, and there is between these three events a kind of loose connection which it is the purpose of this article to explain.

Family allowances

About two years ago I described the reason for Trade Union opposition to family allowances. It was thought that by subsidizing fathers of families, labor would be cheapened for employers. I say "it was thought" but it is, as a matter of fact, extremely difficult to find anybody who really did think that. It was simply part of the doctrinaire labor orthodoxy, and nobody was taken in by it except a few party officials who had learned it in some text book. It is a fact which can be substantiated by ample evidence that on a free vote most labor politicians would have supported family allowances years ago.

The whole matter is symptomatic of one of the worst diseases of modern political democracy from which I have no doubt each of us is suffering in our own way—namely government by the party machines. It is not true that a modern state, whether democratic or otherwise, is governed by hidden financial powers. It is true that its policies are sometimes unduly influenced by very mediocre men who are neither particularly corrupt nor even particularly rich, but who have simply worked their way into certain key positions from where they exercise an iron discipline by sheer force of habit. These guilds of unofficial political bureaucrats are generally too preoccupied with the niceties of the political game to be able to gauge popular feeling, and they are generally limited men of restricted intellectual horizon; for this reason you find them holding up, from sheer force of habit, vital reforms on the necessity of which everybody is agreed. That is what happened about family allowances. The sacred and infallible oracle of the party had decreed, *consule planco,* that family allowances were a wicked device of grasping capitalists, and nothing but an earthquake could alter the Deposit of Faith.

Now I am convinced that if Britain and America are suffering from that disease, Russia has got it even worse, and that Russian relations with the outside world are being poisoned by just such another mammoth piece of stupidity. Some time ago I noticed an editorial note in THE COMMONWEAL complaining of the spate of grossly misleading Soviet propaganda. . . . If I may do so without impertinence, I would like to join in that protest. I agree with every word that was said. There is, or was fairly recently, a tidal wave of misinformation about Russia deluging the Allied countries which must ultimately do an enormous amount of harm—to Russia. The general tenor of this propaganda was to call attention to Russia's economic achievements and to stress her care for working class people. In so far as this was taken to mean (and this undoubtedly was the impression created) that the Russian worker was materially better off than the British and the American worker, it was not only nonsense, but nonsense that was remarkably easy to explode. There is no need of "counter-revolutionary propaganda" for that. You can find the refutation in dozens of articles in the serious and sober type of periodical, which has no political axe to grind, but is simply concerned with getting at the truth.

Russian standards

The truth is that the Russian standard of life is terrible, particularly in such matters as housing, that a great deal of her production (notably in agriculture) is badly behind European and American standards and that her medical services have to be experienced to be believed. Now the harm done by the deliberate dissemination of misleading propaganda in these matters is not only that it must ultimately generate scepticism about anything emanating from Moscow, but that it obscures the real achievements of Russia in which she truly sets an example to the world.

For instance, we hear relatively little about her highly successful handling of racial difficulties and of her achievement in almost completely eliminating the worst side of racial consciousness and racial feeling. I would ask any American who sees these lines to answer one question. Is he prepared to have a Negro or Chinaman as President of the United States? And if he is prepared to accept such a President, would the rest of his countrymen be so prepared? And if, as I strongly suspect will be the case, he can only answer "No"

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to that question, then let him take off his hat to Russia, let him fall down on his knees to Russia, for although Russia may not yet have gone to the very end of that road, she has gone a great deal further than anybody else has. But all that monumental achievement is hardly mentioned at all, and why it is not mentioned is, I am convinced, due to some blithering idiot of a party man in some Moscow office who has read Marx in his boyhood and has kept his eyes shut and his senses corked ever since, and who thinks the economic interpretation of history is the only possible interpretation and who consequently peddles this misleading and irrelevant rubbish across the world.

Now observe the fearful nemesis of this mixture of spiritual blindness and intellectual dishonesty, for the next thing that happens is that a score of blithering idiots outside Russia proceed to take this particular blithering idiot at his face value, and, what is more, to lecture the Russians as a whole for the blithering idiocy of which they are quite innocent.

I came across a little paragraph in a British left-wing paper the other day which illustrated to a nicety this fearful tangle of cross purposes. It reads

> The *New Republic* quotes S. Leighton Frooks, New York City delegate: "While we now agree that Russians are putting up a heroic fight, those millions of Soviet soldiers who died are probably not communists." Of course not. They are butter and egg men from Milwaukee.

As to Mr. Frooks's remark that the millions of Russians were not communists, it seems to me (in so far as it is legitimate to hear such a remark out its context, whatever that was, and make it stand on its own feet) just as illuminating, just as beautiful and true and profound as the statement that the millions of soldiers in the armies of the United Nations are not capitalists, a statement, which I have no doubt, would be greeted by the men in question with rousing and corroborative cheers.

But the remark about the butter and egg men from Milwaukee seems to me, if anything, rather more senseless than that of Mr. Frooks. For every radio station, every channel of Russian propaganda is continually assuring us that butter and egg men is just what the Russians are and is continually inundating us with statistics of their highly suppositious butter and their rather problematical eggs. I use the expression butter and egg men here for what the writer intended it to be—namely, one of those rather silly shorthand symbols meaning materialists, or what our grandfathers called "The Economic Man." I do not suppose that the men who actually trade in butter and eggs are more materialist than anybody else, or that these vices are particularly conspicuous in Milwaukee. I am merely giving the words the meaning that was obviously intended. What the satirical dog who wrote that paragraph means is that Mr. Frooks implied that the rank and file in Russia were just men who believed that the multiplication of worldly goods, whether by individual or collective action, was the supreme object of existence, and that the effort to obtain these was the only effective motive. But, even supposing that this was what Mr. Frooks did mean, there is every excuse for him, considering that is exactly what the official Marxist philosophy says about life and conduct. It would then not be Mr. Frooks who was out of step with Moscow but our satirical friend.

But I do not think Mr. Frooks did mean that. I have said that Mr. Frooks's remark in itself is not particularly profound, and though it is undoubtedly true, I feel that it still might perhaps be misleading in another way. I may, of course, be doing the good Mr. Frooks an injustice, but I have heard this kind of remark so often that I instinctively associate it with a certain partonizing attitude and tone of voice, which somehow does imply that the Russians are really just ordinary people with their interests centered on the car (if they had one), the radio and the sacred duty of keeping up with the Joneses.

Now, however much we may misunderstand and misinterpret the Russian revolution, there is no need for us to misunderstand and misinterpret it as badly as that. The hideous truth is that Marxism and capitalism (together with all the subordinate philosophies which derive and flourish under capitalism) are far nearer to each other (since they have a common ancestor in the Manchester School of economics) than they are to the spiritual reality of Russia, and it is that spiritual reality that has now flamed across the frontiers and set Britain on fire.

Many of my friends in the Catholic press are very alarmed about this, and are, I think, doing some harm to the Catholic cause by reacting too violently against it. I believe they are misreading the situation and that they have failed to realize that what has entered the soul of Britain is something purely spiritual, and that this has found lodgment there, not because of the shallow propaganda and the Marxist nonsense, but in spite of them.

I have always been sceptical of the generalization that the popular instinct is always right, but this is, I believe, one of the occasions when it is true. What the popular instinct has felt in Russia is the expression of two things, a burning conviction of human brotherhood and human equality, and a kind of sacrificial ardor of self immolation and self abnegation which seems to reach a breathbereaving scale and grandeur.

And the reason why the sense of the greatness of these events impinges so powerfully upon us is that they have fundamentally a vital religious

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root. It is the individual losing himself in something that infinitely transcends himself, and tapping some source of power that lies wholly outside his own being.

It is ridiculous here to talk of a "materialist" philosophy. Whatever be the inner nature of this tremendous Thing, it has nothing to do with anybody getting more or less material goods, or anybody's children or grandchildren getting more material goods. The material creations of Soviet Russia are mere symbols, a sort of rather novel, and sometimes rather inferior, Church architecture for a purely spiritual movement that is much wider and more mysterious than mere patriotism.

To understand what is happening in Russia, we must never forget her profound, century-old religious conditioning and that her revolution is the fruit of that. I am not now talking of mere ideas, or of the fact that there are elements in the communist ideology which have something in common with Christian values. I mean that deeply ingrained spiritual habits are at work, and that it is these which have provided the real dynamic of all that has occurred and are the source of that tremendous magnetism that is exercising its power on Britain.

I would like to quote here from a talk given recently by Dr. Evgheny Lampert, sometime member of the Russian Theological Academy, before the National Peace Council * in London, for Dr. Lampert, I think, lays his finger on the spiritual malady of Western Civilization, and thus makes it clear why people do feel a kind of breath of spiritual healing coming from the East.

> Democracy has lost the memory of its own source and origin. It has renounced the principles which gave it birth; it has denied its Christian origin . . . All this has created a certain type of man who is liberal yet indifferent, sceptical yet optimistic, aiming at nothing and dominated by a "middle class" psychology; a man whose social existence has no leading idea and is divorced from his personal and religious vocation . . . The most terrifying thing is to be unprincipled on principle, is this absence of a unifying creative force.

Now reflect on that for a moment, then let Dr. Lampert continue:

> The spiritual world of contemporary Russia is above all an answer to the search for one center for the unification and integration of life. . . . The strength of Russian communism lies in that it slakes the thirst of man for an integral and therefore ultimately religious world outlook. It is alive precisely in its religious pathos, which completely transforms the natural forces of a man, of his will and reason.

And now Dr. Lampert comes to the point I am trying to make here:

> When speaking of the nature of contemporary Russia it must be realized that the positive revelation of her now historical experience since the Revolution does not primarily belong to communism. It is above all a gift of the Russian spirit and Russian culture. Moreover, it is a creation of Russian *Christian* culture, no more or less. . . . In the minds of many Western people Russian Christianity is chiefly associated with a soulless, dead and bureaucratic institution. Yet how many know that in the atmosphere of imperial pomp and ostentation, of impotent and dead magnificence, and *in spite* of it, the prophetic word of Russian Christianity was flaming and coming to maturity?

But this peculiarly Russian Christianity expresses itself in it own special way:

> The whole of the Russian thought and literature of the nineteenth century was permeated by the search for wholeness and universality, and they constantly opposed themselves to the West-European spirit of division, of individualism, of self sufficiency . . . Russian religious thought—in all its often contradictory trends—and the saints of the Russian Orthodox Church aspire to the consummation of all things, to the reunion and recreation of the world and mankind . . .
> Consciously and unconsciously Russia's vision has always been the transfigured and reintegrated universe, the world of new social existence and new human relationships.

Now what is striking home over here has nothing to do with methods of production or distribution of material goods, still less has it anything to do with "materialist interpretation of history." It has to do with a special kind of sickness of the isolated human soul. It is the desperate urge of souls to escape from bondage and to die that they may be reborn and live in a new and vitalizing relation with each other and with the universe. Behind all the Marxist nonsense, it is the Christian flame that is kindling this country. To overlook the reality because of its inept trappings is to fall into the attitude of Western intellectualism (an excellent thing in itself) and to misread Russia. As Dr. Lampert says, Russian thought "is indifferent to abstract knowledge and abstract philosophy. It is not an accident that nearly all Russian thinkers were artists; they search for . . . real and creative action, for direct incarnation." It is precisely because the Russian is negligent of abstract thought that he is prepared to clothe his spiritual life with an intellectual garment which we would reject.

I say that we Catholics would be mad if we did not recognize this thing for what it is, an upsurge of the human spirit, drawing its strength from buried and perhaps long forgotten Christian holiness. That is why it appeals. That is why it strikes home, under its covering of sham names and a sham philosophy. Russia inspires us because here, more than in any country of the world and obscured by the smoke of stupidity and brayed around by doctrinaire half wits, a way is made plain out of the House of Frustration and out of the prison of souls which must inevitably lead at least some way into a greater light.

* The National Peace Council is the leading British organization concerned with the problems of future peace. It is *not* a pacifist organization. It numbers among its collaborators Professor Carr, John McMurray, Senor Madariaga and many other great personalities.

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The Fabian Figaro

By W. H. Auden

IF BIOGRAPHIES of writers are justifiable—and there is much to be said for the view that their own works contain all that is relevant—it is because, in their case, the ways in which they accept and revolt against their immediate situation are peculiarly easy to watch, and the acceptance of and revolt against the immediate is the central human problem of free will.

The sin of the popular writer is an accidie that accepts the social values of his day as absolute; the sin of most good modern writers is a pride that perceives their imperfections in these values and revolts against them, but in so doing, adopts as final values which are opposite but also partial, the mirror image of what it attacks. A writer is great—there are no perfect writers—in the degree to which he transcends both simple acceptance and simple revolt, so that later generations are conscious in reading him less of his relevance to his age and more of his relevance to themselves. In the speech of the Inquisitor in "Saint Joan," for example, Shaw is a great writer; in "As Far as Thought Can Reach" he is only an interesting example of liberal thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. In both cases he is concerned with religion and politics, which he has declared to be the two proper concerns for an adult (his deliberate omission of love makes his adult religion and politics a little strange), and his success in the one and his failure in the other may serve as a starting point from which to consider his life and work.

If we do not know it already, Mr. Hesketh Pearson's account* of his childhood would make it very clear that what was presented to Shaw as the Christian faith was not Christian but unitarian, the eternal religion of this world. The greater the social prestige and political and economic power of the Church, the greater must always be her temptation to "confound the Persons and divide the Substance," i.e., to make God the purely transcendant First Cause of the Greek philosophers, the absentee landlord of the universe, and herself His bailiff. The Word made Flesh must then be either safely imprisoned, like the Emperor of Japan, within the ecclesiastical organization—the danger for Catholicism—or safely "humanized" and turned into a good boy scout—the danger for Protestantism. In either case the Christian *faith* has been abandoned for a political *religion,* more agreeable to the bourgeois Haves in society. Unfortunately, in attacking this heresy, the bohemian Have-nots are tempted to make God purely immanent, in a Great Man, a race, or a class, to deny the Father in the name of the Son.

But this too is a political religion and, moreover, only tenable so long as one is the opposition and therefore without positive political responsibility for human suffering, so long as one is not in a position to make good one's promise of creating a heaven on and out of earth.

As the leader of the English opposition from a time when Darwin was still shocking until Hitler's Blitzkrieg over London, Shaw as a man and as a writer, his highly personal formulation of the Have-not religion, his quirks and biases, his insights and blind spots, deserve the closest consideration.

The Fairy Godmother never bestows her favors singly but always in contrasted pairs: if she gives a power, she also gives a weakness; if she provides a source of happiness, she never fails to add a source of suffering. This has led some psychologists to diagnose the weakness as the cause, and the power as its neurotic effect. This, of course, is rubbish. Suffering is not the cause of genius but its guardian angel, the means by which its possessor is compelled to make the use of his talent a serious matter, the limits which make his freedom a reality.

The fact that Shaw's father was a poor, conscience-stricken drunk and that his genteel mother showed him little affection did not make him imaginative, but they certainly helped to turn his imagination into a moral passion. On the other hand the same situation might have driven a child with a different hereditary make-up in quite other directions. The young Shaw was lucky enough to have the inclination to make the family skeleton dance and not in despair to seek all his life for someone to care for him. Yet the very intense vitality, intellectual curiosity and freedom from the common temptations of sex, money and a Good Time, which have been his greatest strength, have at the same time been his greatest danger.

They almost prevented him from seeing that if he was right in regarding, like Plato, carnal passion as a limitation upon intellectual contemplation which could and should be removed, then, if one were, not Shaw, but only *un homme moyen*

*G. B. S., A Full Length Portrait. Hesketh Pearson. Harper. $3.50.

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sensuel, one's only road to salvation must lie in practicing that morbid "Crosstianity" which he attacked in the preface to "Androcles and the Lion." They almost turned him into one of those stoics who, as Pascal says, "conclude that what has been done once can be done always, and that since the desire of glory imparts some power to those whom it possesses, others can do likewise . . . that all those who are not at the high degree of wisdom are equally foolish and vicious, as those who are two inches under water."

And they almost turned him into an apologist for fascism. His criticism of a Darwinism and a behaviorism which allow no free-will to anyone but History and make evil the necessary present ground for future good—God moves in a malicious way—is brilliant and acute, but his own Lamarckism, which in theory sets no limits to human free-will and makes evil an accidental product of ignorance—my boy, you can be good if you only try sensibly—is in fact quite as pessimistic. For the worship of Universal Necessity, it substitutes the worship of Individual Virtue, the Hero, Hercules-Prometheus who defies the evolutionary Zeus on the grounds that he knows the Creator's mind better than he does himself.

But where did the hero obtain his virtue if not from a Zeus of Necessity who supervized the exceptional mutation of germ-plasm which made him what he is, or from a Zeus of Chance who alloted him a social and economic position in which he was less limited than the churlish mass of mankind? (It is noteworthy that Shaw's English predecessor, Samuel Butler, declared a private income to be a *sine qua non* for the Good Life.) Moreover, if great men are the only hope of the Evolutionary Process, they are morally bound to rule the masses for their own good—we are all here on earth to help others: what on earth the others are here for, I don't know—and the masses have no right whatsoever to resist them. The logical consequence of both the Darwinian and the Lamarckian premise is dictatorship as Hobbes and Plato respectively perceived.

Yes, his gifts almost deceived Shaw; but not quite. For he really is a great man, too intelligent not to know what conclusions would follow, but also too good-hearted and too humble to accept them. Hence, perhaps, the famous Shavian humor, for at the bottom of everything comic lies a contradiction.

He cannot, thank God, be serious for very long: the more logical his argument, the more certain he is to accompany it with a wink. Indeed his only insufferable characters are his good people (using "good" in the Shavian sense); like Candida who is a dreadful woman or Joan who talks like a lady novelist, and his most lovable characters are rogues like Candida's father.

For the same reason, perhaps, while no playwright has ever equalled Shaw in his insight into the effect of occupation upon character—he is the only writer who has read Karl Marx with real profit and most of his plays might be called studies in occupational diseases — yet the occupational type which he cannot draw is his own, the artist: Marchbanks and Dubedat are the mustiest of theatrical props. His most first-hand, realistically unheroic observation is of the political hero, the stoic in a high position. (More Shavian than Shaw, Mr. Hesketh Pearson calls this "the religious temperament!")

Reading this biography, one is shown over and over again how Shaw's instinct has consistently prevented him from becoming what for one of his extraordinary gifts was always tempting and easy, a great man of this world, a politician, and insisted upon his remaining an artist, the one worldly calling which by its nature can force its help on no one, for whatever pleasure and profit one derives from a work of art depends upon what one brings to it.

Is he in danger of becoming successful in business, something makes him walk out; is he in danger of becoming an M.P., something makes him deliver speeches which are bound to infuriate all the voters; is he in danger of leading a crusade, something makes him politely decline the honor by being too funny.

For this, both he and we may be very grateful. His plays are a joy to watch, not because they purport to be concerned with serious problems, but because they are such wonderful displays of conspicuous waste, because the energy shown by any of his characters is so wildly in excess of what their situation practically requires that if it were to be devoted to anything "worthwhile," they would wreck the world in five minutes.

All his life Shaw has been devoted to music (he was probably the best music critic who ever lived) and, as he tells us, it was from Mozart's "Don Giovanni" that he learned "how to write seriously without being dull"; and this devotion is, perhaps, the clue to his work. For all his theater about propaganda, his writing has an effect nearer to that of music than the work of any of the so-called pure writers.

The Mozart of English Letters he is not—the music of the Marble Statue is beyond him—the Rossini, yes. He has all the brio, the humor, the tunes, the clarity, and the virtuosity of that great master of Opera Bouffe.

And this is a very great deal. If now we see errors in his doctrines, the credit must go to Hitler, not to our own acumen; and the present generation, if it is honest, will have to admit that in comparison with its own spokesmen, the "vulgar old buffer" not only had nicer manners, a kinder heart, and a more courageous will, but also wrote a lot better.

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Views & Reviews

BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS

AN OPEN LETTER to the Editors of *Life:*

I have read, and re-read, the editorial article which you entitle "An Open Letter from the Editors of *Life* to the People of England," in your issue of October 12. It is a masterpiece. It seems to me to achieve perfection, in its kind of writing. A masterpiece of mischief-making. The perfection of egotistical presumption: of muddled thinking, and of maudlin emotionalism: the nadir of ineptitude.

"Doubtless it is presumptuous for a single periodical to attempt to speak for the American people." So you begin your preposterous farrago of public-relations sophistry and the confused cant of the advertising psychologist. Thus you leap from the statement of a truth, lamentable but undeniable, the truth that—as your title had already correctly said—you speak for yourselves, in saying and writing and printing the vicious nonsense that follows, to the utterly untenable proposition that you likewise speak "for a large portion of our 134,000,000 fellow citizens."

I deny that it is possible that you can speak for a large portion of the American people in the insulting, patronizing, unreasonable, incoherent piece of inflated buncombe which you address to the people of England. I admit that it is just as difficult, if not altogether impossible, for this writer, or anybody else, to prove in a scientific, that is, demonstrable, way, that you are wrong in this claim as it is for you to prove that you are right in making it. If, which God forbid, your terrifying claim does represent our national mind, then the main reliance of Hitler in his war upon the democracies is well founded—the house of democracy is divided against itself; it is not built upon the rock of unyielding common faith in each other and in the truth and justice of their common fight against the Axis evil—and our defeat and subjugation are, humanly speaking, inevitable.

For what is it that you presume to say, in the name of a large portion of the American people, to the people of England? Stripped of the cloying phrases of lip-service to American determination to stand to the end with and for the cause of England in the common struggle against the Axis, nothing clearly emerges from this spate of muddy writing except accusations against our chief ally that if true would confirm the worst things said by Hitler and Goebbels; but which, being palpably untrue, should be left only to Hitler and Goebbels and their stooges and tools and fellow conspirators against Christian civilization to utter, and for all others to deny and to confound. You say, for example, that now it is the turn of England to help us after all the help to England so far given by us—however dilatory, as you qualify your boasting on America's behalf, that aid has been—by receiving from England "something that never in all our history—with but few exceptions—" we have "received from the English people, namely, concessions in policy." Then you proceed to threaten the English people that if they persist in planning their war strategy, as you presume to judge that they are doing, in order "to hold the British Empire together they will sooner or later find themselves strategizing all alone." You assume that the British prove that they are unconcerned with the fundamental issues of the war, with the fate of all the United Nations, except in so far as such issues first and foremost subserve the imperial interests of the English people. And if the English people, it appears, do not accept the views presented by you in the name of the American people, and at once open a second front, fighting for "principles," and not for self-preservation, the English people will lose the war "because they will lose us"—lose the American people—lose our aid in the war and in the peace after the war. Americans, you tell the English, have always fought for principles—apparently for principles alone, never for anything tangible, or representative of principles applied in practice; but, apparently, the English never have done so, and, apparently, are not doing so now. At any rate, in the test case of India, as the editors of *Life* judge that case, there is no evidence of the presence of "principles of any kind" in the English policy. Therefore, concludes the *Life* editorial, the English "must move way over to Our Side," if they want the American people on Their Side.

It is "as big as all outdoors," you say, in your definition of "our side," the American, as opposed to the English side. For once, you are modest in this torrent of inflated egotism, for "our side," as your describe it, is bigger than all outdoors. For it is chaos, it is pandemonium, it is a whirlpool of confusion. But it is not American. It is only American journalism at its lowest level of irresponsibility.

Communications

Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

TO the Editors: Your plan of a special Pan American issue is to be highly commended. Nothing could do more at this time to strengthen the bonds between the United States and the other American States than to set forth our common ideals and our common political, economic and social interests.

The key to closer cooperation between nations is not to be found in overlooking the practical obstacles presented by such cooperation, but rather in confronting these obstacles in the light of the great body of our common interests. Many problems that seem insuperable when considered in themselves lose much of their difficulty when considered in the light of the more important things that we all have in common. For Catholics the outstanding interest which we share with the Latin American States is our common faith, and our belief that the moral law derived from that faith must play a dominant part in the determination of the principles by which the community of nations must be guided in the future. Not only must we put constant emphasis upon this bond of our common ideals, but we must seek to give concrete application to our ideals in the solution of the problems presented by the maintenance of international law and order.

CHARLES G. FENWICK.

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DAY OF ATONEMENT

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: Permit me a word of comment and appreciation touching Professor Jacques Maritain's article (September 18) in your paper, in which he suggested that on the eve of the Jewish Day of Atonement Catholics lift their prayers to Heaven in compassionate sympathy with their Jewish brothers.

This token of friendship and brotherliness is one of the rays of light which have appeared in a dark and dismal period for our people.

In the divine plan, even evil may not be without some beneficent results, and gain may come out of pain. One can already discern that one of the compensations of the present calamity for mankind may be the sense of essential brotherliness which these evil days have brought to the Jew and Christian, victims alike of the powers of evil. We are rediscovering each other.

An epic of martyrdom is being written by Jew and Christian together in the concentration camps, in the ghettos and in the firing yards of Hitler's Europe.

We take courage from one another and we draw sustaining faith from the Fountainhead of all faith.

ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN,
President, Synagogue Council of America.

CATHOLIC SOLDIERS

River Forest, Ill.

TO the Editors: I have often wondered why THE COMMONWEAL has never yet suggested to its readers the idea of sending this outstanding Catholic periodical to young men in our training camps in the United States. Thousands of our college and university trained, intellectually alert boys should welcome this weekly, which might indeed very profitably replace much that is at best mediocre.

May I suggest that THE COMMONWEAL launch a campaign to bring home to Catholics the wisdom of providing their sons, brothers and friends with a superior Catholic weekly whose contributors are leaders in Catholic thought?

Parents of our inducted boys, and Catholic young women in and out of college, could very easily avail themselves of the special rate which you make for a three months' subscription to THE COMMONWEAL, and thereby help some soldier both intellectually and spiritually.

L. J. C.

The Stage & Screen

The Eve of St. Mark

"THE EVE OF ST. MARK" is the best play Maxwell Anderson has written in many years. By replacing overstatement with understatement, Anderson has contrived the first affecting account of America at war.

It's not by any means the whole account of America at war. Anderson has ruthlessly simplified in the interests of patriotism. But his patriotism is serious and dignified; his distortion is in the classic spirit. It's at core a romantic play, but its romantics are not the cheap romantics of "Journey's End." Isolated scenes of "The Eve of St. Mark" recall, by virtue of their salty, colloquial dialogue, Anderson's collaboration with Laurence Stallings upon "What Price Glory." But the predominating tone is closer to Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." Wilder didn't tell us the truth about a New England village. However, his nostalgic idealization possessed a truth of its own—true, that is to say, to our aspirations if not to our experience. On the surface, both "The Eve of St. Mark" and "Our Town" are realistic plays. But both, in their central concept, disavow realism as the final reality. This is at the same time the strength and the weakness of both plays, and especially of "The Eve of St. Mark," which achieves a more awkward fusion between realism and mysticism. The scenes where the hero, marooned on a lethal Philippine island, communicates in spirit with his sweetheart and mother contrast too sharply with the prevailing naturalistic tone. In half his scenes Anderson is telling us this is what war, this is what American soldiers, this is what the families of American soldiers are like. In the other half he is extolling the virtues of the ideal rural American. The factual scenes recognize a complexity of human character and behavior which the inspirational scenes refute. Anderson has glimpsed and suggested but nowhere definitively expressed the focal tragedy of war: its reduction of the individual to the anonymous, uncomprehending, reluctant warrior.

The action alternates between a farm village in western New York which is the home of the hero's family and sweetheart, and the barracks where the hero is trained, the adjoining saloon, the gangplank of the ship that is to carry him overseas, and his post in the Philippines. Howard Bay has designed effective settings on a turntable, dramatically lighted by Moe Hack. Lem Ward has directed an able cast which features William Prince, Aline MacMahon, Mary Rolfe, Eddie O'Shea, Matt Crowley, George Mathews, Joann Dolan and James Monks. The latter plays a stock southern scion who provides Anderson with opportunities for poetic quotations which might better have been left in Bartlett's. *(At the Cort.)*

A Season of Ballet

THE BALLET is back in town. Judging from the size and the enthusiasm of the audience at the Metropolitan the night I attended, no more than a bare announcement is necessary. This season, S. Hurok is alternating the Ballet Theater with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. On October 12, the latter took over from the former, which, however, is scheduled to return on October 22, to remain through November 1.

Stars of the Ballet Theatre are lovely Irina Baronova, Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova; the chief novelty of their first visit was "Aleko" by Leonide Massine and Marc Chagall, inspired by Pushkin's poem "Gypsies" and set to Tchaikowsky music orchestrated by Erno Rapee; Massine did the choreography, and Chagall personally

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executed a series of backdrops which represent, in my opinion, the highpoint in the career of this master of engaging fantasy. The world première of Dolin's "The Romantic Age" is promised for October 23.

Top luminaries of the Monte Carlo company are Leonide Massine, Alexandra Danilova, Mia Slavenska, and André Eglevsky, now happily recovered from the injury to his leg. Three novelties will be offered: two by Bronislava Nijinski—"Snow Maiden" with music by Glazunoff and costumes by Boris Aronson, and "Chopin Concerto," originally created for the Polish ballet; the third Anges de Mille's "Rodeo, or the Courting of Burnt Ranch," with a score by Aaron Copland, sets by Oliver Smith, and costumes by Kermit Love. Miss de Mille will herself dance the principal rôle. *(At the Metropolitan.)*

Count Me In

"COUNT ME IN" is an intimate, topical revue first presented as a casual entertainment by Washington's Catholic University, inflated by the Messrs. Shubert and Olsen & Johnson into a big-time Broadway musical. Howard Bay has furnished brilliantly imaginative sets; Irene Sharoff has provided costumes of equal quality; Robert Alton has drilled a decorative chorus into lilting dance routines. Charles Butterworth, Luella Gear, Hal LeRoy, June Preisser, Mary Healy, Gower and Jeanne contribute professional performances. But the net result is topheavy; the production is too pretentious for the book, which deals with the head of a family marooned in civilian life when his wife, daughter and sons take to uniform.

Broadway musicals are a curious species. Now and then an "Of Thee I Sing" or a "Pal Joey" comes forth with a fresh, satirical idea. But the sure, routine successes aim at the eye rather than the brain. Or rather, the eye and ear; a thin book is often redeemed by catchy songs. The book of "Count Me In" is no thinner than average, but the music is harder to whistle. Even so, "Count Me In" looks so much like a top grade musical that I expect it will enjoy a considerable success. The individual number I enjoyed best was "Who Is General Staff?", a genial handling of our Japanese opponents which contrasts refreshingly with the usual hysterical zenophobia of such sketches. *(At the Ethel Barrymore.)*

Let Freedom Sing

"LET FREEDOM SING" is likewise a topical musical, but staged in the revue rather than the operetta medium. Its sponsor is the Youth Theatre, which has gradually been closing in upon Broadway from the environs of Central Park South. The music and lyrics are "mostly by Harold Rome." Mr. Rome has given over leftist social commentary ("Pins and Needles") in favor of patriotism, sometimes straightforward as in "It's Fun to Be Free," othertimes mildly satirical as in "The Lady Is a WAAC."

For a professional cachet, the Youths have enlisted Mitzi Green. Mitzi, it will be remembered, retired from public life at the venerable age of 12, but made a spectacular comeback in "Babes in Arms," in the course of which she built into juke-box favorites "Where or When" and "The Lady Is a Tramp." Her material is slighter in "Let Freedom Sing," and her adult personality—she's 21 now—less exceptional. "Of V We Sing's" Betty Garrett easily upstages her; a fresh, easy young lady who impersonates with equal charm a schoolmarm teaching her pupils "History Eight to the Bar" and a pig-tailed tomboy taunting "Johnny Is a Hoarder." Berni Gould elevates several skits into engaging comedy, and Phil Leeds makes wacky nonsense. Critical and audience opinion decided that the total was not robust enough for 48th Street and the doors were closed at the end of the first week, but the promoters are now recruiting outside backing to continue. *(At the Longacre.)*

Three Men on a Horse

NOW that Mayor LaGuardia has declared war on petty gamblers, local devotees of the bangtails must indulge their depravity at second hand. For the benefit of these, and of others who enjoy fast, haywire comedy, Alex Yokel has revived the farce with which George Abbott and John Cecil Holm regaled 835 New York audiences seven seasons ago.

In case you missed the original production, the movie, and the Eddie Cantor musical, "Three Men on a Horse" concerns a Mother's Day Wordsworth who beguiles the bus ride to his office by figuring out the day's winners from a racing form. His prognostications are uncannily accurate, but he never bets because that would spoil the game. One afternoon, after a misunderstanding with his wife, he stumbles into a bar where a trio of tinhorn handicappers, recognizing his untapped genius, shanghai him. From there on, the laughs parlay dizzily.

It's good news that William Lynn is again the reluctant tout, Erwin Trowbridge. And Teddy Hart is again Frankie, assisted now by Horace McMahon and Sid Stone in place of Millard Mitchell and Sam Levene. Tote tickets at the high window have been marked down to $1.65. *(At the Forrest.)*

Strip for Action

I HAD SPACE last week for only the briefest appreciation of Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's "Strip for Action." Or I should say Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, and Bretaigne Windust's "Strip for Action." Without Windust's brilliant direction, "Strip for Action" must have emerged as pure pandemonium. There's a cast of 49, continuously in violent motion, speaking either double fast or doubletalk. Windust's technique was not to eliminate the pandemonium but to play it up, somehow miraculously managing to shape it into coherence. The fun of "Strip for Action" is ninety percent its rollicking pace.

Like that earlier production of Lindsay and Crouse which Windust likewise directed, "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Strip for Action" assumes that you *can* eat your cake and have it, too. "Arsenic and Old Lace" was at the same time a travesty of mystery plays and a good mystery play in its own right. "Strip for Action" is at the same time a travesty of burlesque shows and a good burlesque show

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in its own right. The plot—as though it matters—is this: Nutsy Davis, a burlesque comic involved in the draft, discovers a disused theater near his camp and invites a few dozen of his old stage-fellows to put on a show there for his buddies. When his officers forbid the performance, Nutsy and his girl—A W O L from Miss Simsbury's—steal the Major's car and drive to Washington to exercise a little polite blackmail on the Chief of Staff. Well, the show goes on, with Nutsy escorted by a pair of M P's who follow him even under the prop bed; for love, Nutsy's girl agrees to concentrate on daisy chains rather than G strings.

Vulgar? Well, yes. But with the exception of one or two short sketches, the vulgarity is ribbed, not played for its own snide value. For example, Jean Carter finds occasion to execute some highly professional bumps in the strictly Gaiety manner; but the audience attention is directed not toward her anatomy but toward the timid rookie drummer whose blues interfere with his timing. And her strip is ten times more modest than the pretty in "Show Time" whose coverings of war stamps are auctioned off to the audience. This is less a plea for the return of burlesque than a rowdy wake.

The funniest scenes are the rehearsals: the dyspeptic stage manager drilling his bored "elephants" in their parade routine; Keenan Wynn (Ed's son), Joey Faye and Murray Leonard racing through corny backdrop routines. Billy Koud is a delight as the deadpan impresario who resembles a truant from the Keeley cure; Eleanor Lynn is a cute and vivacious heroine; the girlies look, talk and act like burlesque girlies and the rookie soldiers, for a wonder, look, talk and act like rookie soldiers. Don't take Junior, but Grandma will probably love it. *(At the National.)*

DAVID BURNHAM.

Women Seeking

WE ARE ALL accustomed to seeing Bette Davis as a neurotic; in many a film she has played a psychopathic who succeeds in messing up the lives of people around her and she usually winds up by thoroughly wrecking her own. In "Now, Voyager" the situation is different. Miss Davis gives another splendid performance as a mental case, but in this story, based on the novel by Olive Higgins Prouty, she has our sympathies and she is snapped out of her derangement in time to become a constructive member of society. Makeup Artist Perc Westmore has done one of his best jobs on Miss Davis for her opening scenes. You first see Charlotte Vale (glasses, shaggy eyebrows, fat, unbecoming dress) when she is being interviewed by a famous psychiatrist (Claude Rains) who was brought to the Vales' proper, proud, Back Bay, stuffy Boston house by Charlotte's sister-in-law (Ilka Chase). Charlotte, who was an unwanted, late child, is the victim of her mother's bitterness and lack of understanding. Gladys Cooper gives her best film performance as this wickedly vehement, convention-bound matriarch who persecutes her own ugly duckling. Like Andersen's ugly duckling, Charlotte emerges from the care of the psychiatrist, a stunning, beautifully groomed swan. Fortified with the line from Whitman: "Now, voyager, set thou forth to seek and find," Charlotte sets out on the adventure

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of living. Fortunately she finds Jerry Durrance (Paul Henreid) who is also lonely and who is understanding of her problem. But unfortunately for Charlotte, who falls in love with Jerry, he is already married. The rest of the film is taken up with their parting, Charlotte's success in making over her own life even in Boston, her decision to marry a nice solid Bostonian (John Loder), her running into another nervous collapse when she feels guilt at the death of her mother, her second rescue—this time through devoting herself to Jerry's neurotic child. All this is so much like the tripe dished up in women's magazines that it is difficult to imagine men having the patience to watch it through. The picture is too long, but the good acting and Irving Rapper's intelligent direction have made a moving and interesting film of the material. However, as good as the production is, the film is still only story-book stuff and pretty obvious. The telling of the story in this case is greatly aided by Max Steiner's musical score.

A much more realistic film about a woman who set forth to find her place is the English picture about Amy Johnson. *"Wings and the Woman"* is a straightforward and sincere cinema biography. Anna Neagle portrays the famous flier without a lot of fancy glorification. True, Miss Neagle is an attractive blonde and she does not age convincingly during the twenty years covered by the plot, but at the same time her portrait is convincing and noteworthy for its honest simplicity. We see the English girl who refused to be just another cog, who rebelled against convention and who took her career seriously. She graduated from university in 1925, became a stenographer, a ribbon clerk, a secretary. Unable to abide four walls day after day, she gave vent to her restlessness by learning to fly. From then on the film shows her as a crusader for aviation. We see her courageous solo flight to Australia in 1930. She breaks record after record. She keeps her head in spite of all the cheering and acclaim. Herbert Wilcox, who produced and directed this stirring story of a leader in her field, deserves great credit for his amazingly honest handling of the theme. We all know the outline of Amy's career and achievements. Unfortunately her unhappy marriage to Jim Mollison and the divorce that followed was also covered by the newspapers. Robert Newton's portrayal of Amy's flier-husband is excellent. Seldom before has a film shown a playboy with such conviction. Newton succeeds in making Mollison a complex, real person, not just a symbol of a hard-drinking, faithless husband.

"Wings and the Woman," then, through its frankness, merits respect. It shows how a biographical film can combine drama, excitement and reality without being sensational. Wilcox, Neagle and Newton deserve applause.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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Books of the Week

Public Censor

A Time for Greatness. Herbert Agar. Little. $2.50.

"QUIS custodiet custodes?" is a question that Mr. Agar introduces into his discussion of American politics. Perhaps he will not take it amiss that the reviewer apply the principle to his volume. That Mr. Agar is one of the wardens of the contemporary American conscience is evident from his writings and from his position as president of Freedom House. On the whole he exercises this exalted rôle admirably. Throughout most of his book he defends positions that are morally unassailable. In view of his general record, he could be forgiven his rather stern stricture on the conduct of the Belgians in their defeat. It may be regarded as a slip that he included Hobbes among the good men Hitler should know; if the Fuehrer ever made his acquaintance, he would be extremely pleased.

But there is one major lapse, more all-pervading that will bear scrutiny. When the author sets out to solve the German enigma in a few pages, he undergoes a change of mood as abrupt as one found in the music of Tschaikowsky. A reference to Raoul de Sales and a quotation from H. F. Armstrong, both unhappy choices, and he writes: "Sentimental and brutal, romantic and efficient, Germany has always been a perplexing combination of suburban businessman and blood-hungry savage"; and, "It is only the German nation which has taught itself for generations that the barbarian soul, instead of being a destroyer, is a regenerator—that civilization is a form of decadence that must be renewed from time to time by brutal exaltations and by blood baths." There is more of the same,

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which is surprising in a man who describes with eloquence the barbarian in our own bosom. There is lack of historical perspective in the statement that "in Germany the barbarian is closer to the surface than in the rest of the world," when it is set forth without qualification or historical explanation. The recollection of conversations with Herr Bruening, to mention but one exception, makes me sensitive to such generalizations. I believe that this ex-chancellor of the Reich is as representative of German culture as the present incumbent; just as I believe that Mr. Agar is more representative of America than Al Capone. The fact that the political Capones won power in Germany is a hard fact to explain, but at least something is to be gained by admitting that it is a complex historical phenomenon, a bit more intricate than this "barbarian soul" stuff would indicate.

This would be a cavil with a book that should be highly welcomed were it not for the fact that by it the author is defeating his own purpose. There is danger in contributing to a prejudice in the mind of the average American that will make a decent peace doubly difficult. We are adding to the great lie that hovered above the peace table at Versailles and poisoned its discussions. It was the guilty remembrance of that lie that prevented moral-minded Anglo-Saxons from carrying out the provisions of the peace and made them reluctant to respond to the new crusade when real danger threatened.

It is an apt title, "A Time for Greatness," and the author does not hesitate to demand a high standard of rectitude from his readers. He believes passionately that this is a war to maintain civilization, and argues with conviction that this type of war cannot be won without a return to religion, morality and political principle. He spurns both moral relativism and that perfectionist vision that has been the curse of our unhappy time. He would have us slough off our old delusions that progress consists in making better nail files, and that the forward march of civilization is inevitable if we only allow our scientists to do their work. He would have us assert the supremacy of the moral law over economics and the whole field of human life. He urges us to do justice to the Negro and to colored peoples everywhere; and to realize the explosive force in our principle of equality. He wants us to forget our prejudices against labor unions and the legitimate aspirations of the working man. Above all he wants us to purify ourselves so that we may become worthy of the good peace we hope to establish. This is a splendid program that convinces us that the author has achieved the greatness that is necessary for our time.

Technically, the book suffers from the abundance of the good causes it espouses. In homiletics there is a humorous term, the "vegetable conclusion," to describe the preacher who involves himself in a number of moral imperatives, and resolves them by ending with a series of "Let us . . . Let us . . . Let us . . ." But while we find here material for a score of volumes, we can be most thankful that we have such a vigilant watcher over the conscience of America on our ramparts today. "Quis custodiet custodes?" In most matters I will trust Mr. Agar. JOSEPH N. MOODY.

FICTION

Marling Hall. Angela Thirkell. Knopf. $2.50.

"HAVE you ever tried to describe a Thirkell novel?" begins the blurb on the jacket of "Marling Hall." The question is purely rhetorical, the answer being that you certainly can't; and when the blurb goes on to talk of "sly wit," "dealing with the most charming people, some of them a little daft," the reviewer knows where he stands, and feels very grateful to his unknown collaborator. If he is a certain type of critic, he even feels dispensed from reading the book. This would be a mistake. No less a literary pontiff than Professor William Lyon Phelps has declared that Miss Thirkell (whose relatives include Burne-Jones, J. W. Mackail, Kipling and—Earl Baldwin of distasteful memory) is "one of the most entertaining writers in contemporary literature." The adjective we ourselves would have chosen for such books as Marling Hall is "disarming." Several of its characters are indeed delightful, some are a bit cuckoo and one or two are boring to a degree. The book is a lighthearted but not remarkably witty picture of County Society in wartime, less sinister than Mr. Waugh's "Put Out More Flags," less sentimental than "Mrs. Miniver." The author reminds one in a minor fashion of Trollope and Jane Austen. Her great talent, like that of E. F. Benson in the exquisite Lucia series, is not for drama or romance, but for delineating people one would walk miles to avoid in real life, but who have a wonderful nuisance value in mere fiction. CUTHBERT WRIGHT.

LATIN-AMERICA

Frontier by Air. Alice Rogers Hager. Macmillan. $3.50.
Brazil under Vargas. Karl Lowenstein. Macmillan. $2.75.

THE prospect of a country larger than the United States opening up its rich frontier of rivers, mountains and forests not by boat, automobile and railroad, but by airplane, staggers the imagination. Particularly when this vast terrain is covered in such large part by jungle so thick and so vigorous that it is constantly threatening to cover over whatever air fields have been cleared. That is the prospect in Brazil. Mrs. Hager and her ace photographer, Jackie Martin, present this prospect in a highly *National Geographic* style. Their travels are varied and pleasant, their observations not too deeply significant, their tone every so often on the flowery feminine side. "Frontier by Air" is rather informative, easy reading.

Professor Lowenstein's volume, a careful study of the Vargas régime, confirms what the aforesaid travel book says of the extreme affability and attractiveness of the people of Brazil. In fact, their gentle and genial temperament serves him as a key in interpreting fairly what might otherwise be a one-sidedly harsh dictatorship. From the outset it becomes clear that no satisfactory appraisal of the Vargas régime can be reached if we seek to apply categories developed from the history of democracy in the United States. For as the author says: "Brazil under Vargas defies the customary classification on legal or political lines."

As far as the Brazilian tradition goes the mainspring of their conception of democracy is that things are decided by law without respect of persons. This has long been the tradition, and Professor Lowenstein is regretful to find certain tendencies in the Vargas régime that violate it. One instance is the procedure of the Tribunal of National Security, which was set up to adjudge all political offenses. The author says: "To an Anglo-Saxon lawyer the whole method of how evidence is taken and weighed appears most unpalatable." But he finds much to commend even in this Tribunal, as it has not inflicted a single death sentence and tends in economic matters to guard the little man against exploitation.

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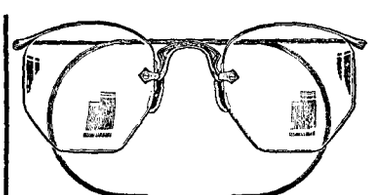

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From all he can determine from the most painstaking first-hand investigation—and in most matters the government did everything possible to facilitate his inquiry—the Vargas régime, although an outright dictatorship, is an extremely popular one. The governor of each of the 26 states of Brazil is a personal appointee of Getulio Vargas and this is only one way in which he keeps power under his own personal control. Many of these governors, or Interventors, as they are called, have proved to be real statesmen. Under the new system legislative and executive powers have been fused. There are no political parties, not even a Vargas party; the difficulty of political opposition may well be imagined. Since the Vargas coup of 1930 the process of solidifying and centralizing authority has proceeded apace, being currently stimulated by the war crisis. One of its bad effects is the costliness and inefficiency of the vast lesser bureaucracy which has grown up.

On the other side of the ledger are the many accomplishments of the Vargas régime for the common good. The organization and integration of the whole country has enabled the government to make real strides in such fields as education, sanitation, minimum wage, and to some extent agrarian reform. The extreme poverty in the large cities and remote rural districts has not yet been alleviated to any great extent, but this task is too superhuman for immediate accomplishment. The upshot of the author's investigations—and they are careful and well documented—is moderately favorable on the whole. But to a North American nurtured on political democracy and the balance of powers one question persists: What will happen if the successor of Vargas, instead of a benevolent despot, turns out to be a real tyrant? Where will the Brazilian people be then? EDWARD SKILLIN, JR.

BRIEFERS

What's Your Name? Louis Adamic. Harper. $2.50.

WITH HIS CUSTOMARY EASE of style, America's best publicist of the immigrant pretty well settles the name problem. He shows how a change from some tongue-twister to something "simpler-to-pronounce" can produce devastating psychic effects, and by-and-large he disapproves changes unless they take place organically. For one's name does mean a surprising lot to most of us—far more than we are ordinarily willing to admit. Adamic believes that the war will considerably relieve the pressure toward this sort of "Americanization." When a succession of national heroes emerges whose names are distinctly "foreign," even the worst patrioteers are likely to be convinced. If the matter interests you, here is a book crammed with instances and sound advice.

The Cup and the Sword. Alice Tisdale Hobart. Bobbs. $2.75.

THIS tale of family, winegrowing and California lacks the distinction of the author's "Oil for the Lamps of China." It is deficient in both focus and suspense, but might appeal to addicts of specifically family chronicles. The reader who knows anything about vineyards would be more than normally interested. It is a story of conflict and unhappiness. The note of social consciousness comes in under the guise of a struggle between the independent growers and the large wine companies. And the patriarch of the family stands forth as the symbol of integrity, conservatism and an almost sacramental view of his life work.

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The Inner Forum

Inter-American Program

THE National Council of Catholic Women, inspired by the success of the recent Inter-American Seminar, have undertaken a Pan American program embodying four principal objectives: Hospitality toward visiting students and others from the Latin Americas; study clubs; Spanish classes for adults; lectures and tours. The NCCW *Monthly Message* for October suggests that there are various means of getting in touch with students from Central and South America now enrolled in both Catholic and secular colleges in the United States. Local branches of the NCCW are urged to get in touch with these students through chaplains, Newman Clubs, the dean or other faculty members or students from the United States. It is suggested that they do this at the beginning of the school year. The NCCW also extends hospitality to Latin American visitors by notifying local groups of their expected arrival in the neighborhood. The source of this information is the weekly "Register of Visitors from the Other American Republics" sent out by the office of Inter-American affairs. But local groups are also advised to follow their local newspapers. Entertainment at their homes, trips to Catholic institutions and invitations to address local meetings are among the means suggested.

"Perhaps more than any other group, the Catholics of the Americas have a responsibility to work in harmony—for a common cause: a just peace and charity in post-war reconstruction. How can we learn to know our neighbors to the South? We can study their geography, history, literature, music, art. A list, 'Suggested Reading in Ibero-American History,' is available at headquarters." (1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C.)

It is suggested that local instructors of Spanish be approached on the question of organizing classes for adults. For advanced groups work in translation is advised. Mrs. D. V. Renuart of Coral Gables, Florida, chairman of the sub-committee on Inter-American Relations, is eager to know of groups that would be interested in translating works from Spanish (and presumably Portuguese) into English. Finally, it is recommended that those who have traveled in Latin America be invited to address study groups and other gatherings.

CONTRIBUTORS

John C. CORT is a labor journalist, a former AFL organizer, and one of the founders of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

J. L. BENVENISTI is an English writer on social and political subjects. Perhaps his best known book is the "Iniquitous Contract."

W. H. AUDEN is a poet and critic. His most recent book is "The Double Man." He is at present a member of the faculty of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.

Rev. Joseph N. MOODY, who formerly taught at Cathedral College in New York, is at present serving as a Navy Chaplain.

Cuthbert WRIGHT teaches English at Assumption College, Worcester, Mass.

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